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ABSTRACT

This guide presents the steps necessary to create and pursue a strategic perspective on improving the education system. The emphasis is on generating change in the classroom, and the guide focuses on districtwide school/business initiatives with the goal of basic reform. The guide is organized in six sections that cover the following: (1) the importance of strategy--why local partnerships?; (2) developing strategy--first steps; (3) from vision to action--the game plan for change (developing an action agenda, business as an agent of work force development, and summarizing the action agenda); (4) from latent to legitimate power; (5) organizing the partnership for effectiveness; and (6) evaluating results. The guide also lists 15 references and has two appendixes: a list of the organizations representing initiatives cited in the report and a list of 20 information resources for school-business partnerships and educational reform. (KC)

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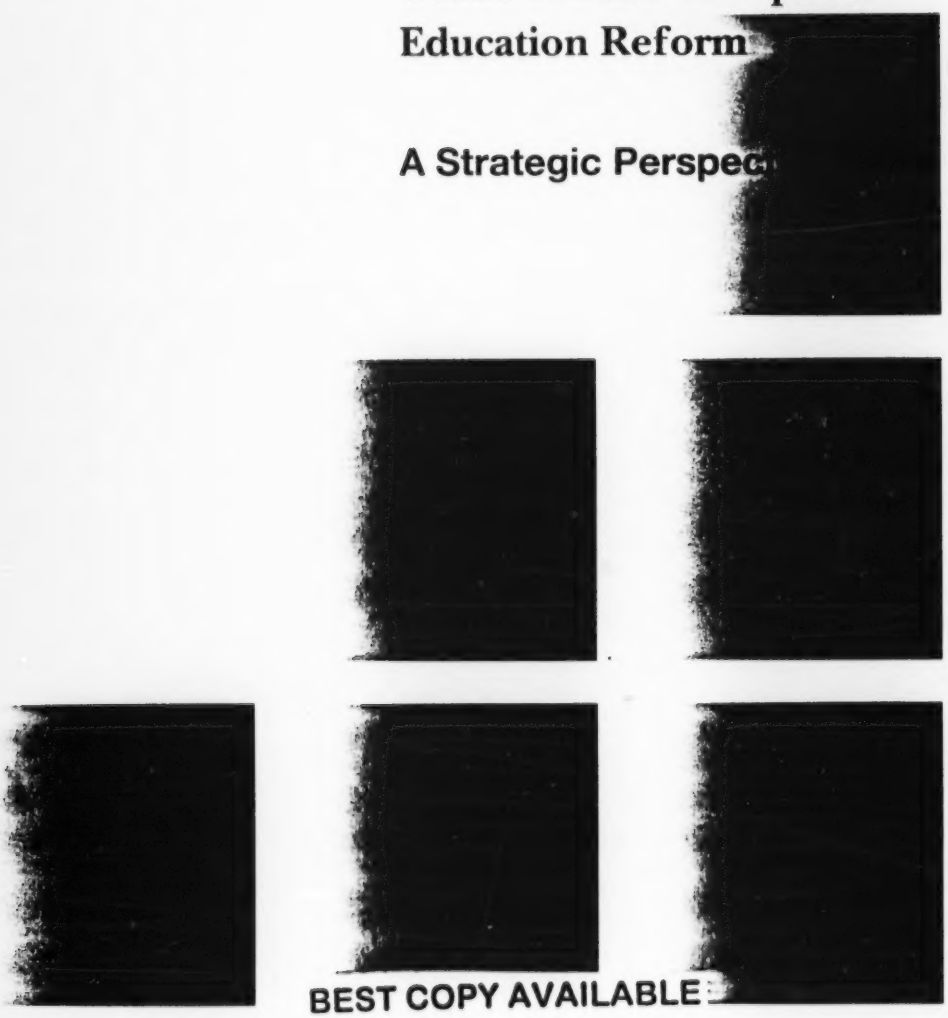
A Strategic Perspec



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The Business Leader's Guide to Partnerships for Education Reform

A Strategic Perspective

Richard H. de Lone

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Public/Private Ventures (P/PV) is a not-for-profit corporation that designs, manages and evaluates social policy initiatives aiming to increase the skills, opportunities and self-sufficiency of disadvantaged youth.

To achieve that goal, P/PV works with schools, employment and training organizations, community-based agencies, foundations, business and government to find more effective approaches to education, training and employment.

- We design new strategies to address such pressing problems as the high dropout rate, illiteracy, teen pregnancy and youth unemployment.
- We evaluate the effectiveness of programs devised to confront these problems.
- We conduct multisite national demonstrations to test promising new solutions.
- We help the public and private sectors to identify and replicate those initiatives that have proven effective.

From all its work, P/PV distills the best practices and most significant research findings, and actively promotes their use in the field and in the development of sound public policy.

Acknowledgments

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Field work and documentation of school/business collaborations in 10 cities were performed for this project by Mary Moorhouse and Lallie O'Brien, with assistance from Thomas J. Smith, Julita Milliner, Bernardine Watson and the author. In addition to analyzing these findings, the author drew on his own experience in New York, Philadelphia and Indianapolis; and on P/PV staff work in Cleveland, seven cities in the National Alliance for Business's Compact Replication Project in 1988, and nine jurisdictions operating collaborative programs in 1983 through 1985. We are grateful to the business, education, community and government leaders and staff in all these sites for their cooperation with our research effort.

The project was managed by Mary Moorhouse with oversight from Gary Walker. Natalie Jaffe edited and prepared the draft for publication; Maxine Sherman did the processing, Michael Callaghan copyedited, and Malish Design designed and produced the book.

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Foreword

Rick de Lone's interest in the schools shaped his extraordinary career: in 1964, soon after attending Harvard and Berkeley, he became the old Philadelphia *Bulletin*'s education reporter. His competitors—and sources—were greatly relieved when he moved to the other side of the street in 1967, as special assistant to Superintendent Mark Shedd.

Subsequently, Rick lectured on educational administration at Amherst; designed an anti-drug program for the New York City schools; wrote a wonderful book for the Carnegie Council on Children, *Small Futures: Children, Inequality and the Limits of Liberal Reform*; helped P/PV get started and was its president from 1980 to 1983; then established his own firm, which specialized in promoting, advising and guiding business involvement in the reform of public education. Over the years, Rick remained in close touch with P/PV and, as a consultant, worked on several of our major projects.

In late 1991, we engaged Rick to write a report on business involvement in school reform based on field work done in 10 cities specifically for this project, on P/PV's other school/business collaboration work, and on Rick's own long and intensive experience in the field. As he put the finishing touches on a major effort to reform vocational education in Philadelphia—which he had been working on for several years as director of the business-led Committee to Support the Philadelphia Public Schools—he drafted the report presented here.

We believe the report makes a special contribution. It speaks directly to business leaders who want to help bring about school change; it emphasizes the key strategic issues; it focuses on the need for basic reform in the classroom, where teaching and learning happen; and it is grounded in actual experience of the field—all conveyed in Rick's inimitable prose.

The subtitle, *A Strategic Perspective*, defines the report. It's not only about *what* to do, but what first to *think* about: whether basic reform is needed in a particular city and whether the actors are ready; what role business leadership could and should take; how difficult it is to persevere and succeed; and how important it is to try despite the potential for failure that is always present. As the report illuminates the large political issues involved, it also focuses on crucial details at the delivery level—in the schools, where teachers teach (or don't) and students learn and prepare to enter the work force (or don't).

Richard H. de Lone died on June 23, 1992, with this publication nearing completion. It richly reflects P/PV's perspective on the potential of school/business collaborations, as well as Rick's unique expertise. In publishing it, we honor him and trust that its readers will honor him as well, by finding it provocative and useful in developing a strategic perspective on the business role in education reform.

Michael A. Bailin

President, Public/Private Ventures

Executive Digest

This guide is addressed primarily to business leaders engaged in trying to make school/business partnerships an engine for school reform. Using examples from cities around the country, it is intended to help business in planning, reshaping and assessing reform efforts in their communities. The guide should also prove useful for school and community leaders involved in such partnerships.

"Helping-hand" and "project-driven" partnerships can support reform, but they are not our primary interest. Rather, we focus on districtwide school/business initiatives whose goal is basic reform, which we define as changing what happens in the classroom. Improvement in student learning must be the measure of whatever corollary changes are needed in governance, the basic structure of schooling, and the relationships between schools, families and other youth-serving agencies, such as social service providers.

If reform is the goal, business requires allies—in the community and the school system. And, ultimately, dynamic local educational leadership is the fundamental prerequisite for change. But business can make a vital contribution by first ensuring that its community takes a strategic approach to reform, then defining the role or roles it will play in the reform process.

The guide suggests that to be an effective agent for reform of urban education, business must address six strategic issues. Answers to the questions these issues raise are unlikely to come entirely from an up-front planning process; instead, they are more likely to emerge over time, in a process of learning by doing. Nonetheless, sooner or later, effective partnerships must address these questions; how well they are answered will determine much about the prospects for success.

1. The first strategic issue involves understanding the elements of fundamental reform; deciding whether such reform is needed; and, if so, developing a broadly shared, well-understood vision to guide the effort.

Fundamental reform should encompass three elements: changes in the management structure, which may involve moving toward a decentralized system; changes in the basic educational delivery structure, which may alter school starting and leaving ages, traditional school days and years, keeping students together for more than one year, and the like; and reforms in teaching and learning that will increase students' engagement in the educational enterprise.

In deciding the degree to which these reform elements are needed, there are four useful questions to pose:

- Are education outcomes satisfactory for the *average-to-best* students?
- If outcomes are unsatisfactory primarily for *disadvantaged* students, is there strong reason to believe that improvements in the current school program will change these outcomes?
- Do most courses and classrooms offer the kinds of learning experiences that will produce critical thinking, problem-solving, teamwork and the capacity to learn to learn?
- Is the current organizational and governance structure of the school system capable of producing the needed changes at the classroom level?

If the answer to any of these questions is "no," fundamental reform is probably needed. Which questions are answered "no" will also help determine which elements of reform need the most attention. The next step is to develop a vision for each of the elements: a process that works best if it involves a broad cross-section of education, business, political and civic leaders to provide the backing, shared understanding and continuity of effort needed for implementation.

2. A closely related issue is whether school system leadership supports the call for reform and generally concurs with the business community's vision.

Optimally, the school board, the superintendent and the teachers' union will all support reform, for these are the groups that will have the greatest day-to-day responsibility and authority for its implementation. If not, business leaders may decide to bide their time, or to start working for a change in school system leadership. The common denominator of success when business groups have effected changes in leadership—on the board of education, in the superintendency, or both—has been coalition-building with political and community leadership.

3. If reform is a "go," the next issue is developing an action agenda. School personnel will bear the major responsibilities for implementing reform—but there is much the business community can do.

Keys to developing an effective action plan include:

- A technically sound plan that diagnoses basic areas most in need of change, and devises responses that utilize current knowledge about youth development and effective learning practices;
- Clarity on goals, measures and responsibilities; and
- Involvement of all the groups that will be involved in executing the plan, plus individuals who have expertise in how people learn. The challenge at this stage is retaining the focus on changes that have clear implications for classroom learning.

The business community has a number of choices concerning the role it plays to implement the action plan. It typically plays one or two of the following roles—but experience indicates that playing a little of each is not ultimately productive:

- A *watchdog*—monitoring and assessing progress;
- A *supporter*—responding to requests for help on an ad hoc basis;
- A *convener*—bringing together and helping hold together institutions whose involvement is necessary for reform programs to succeed;
- An *advocate*—lobbying or pushing for key policies, funding, or statutory/regulatory change; and
- An *agent*—responsible for implementing programs on its own or in collaboration with others.

In most school systems, it is imperative for business to become involved as an *agent* in improving work learning and employment opportunities, since business has a broad understanding of what needs to be done, and controls access to jobs and careers.

4. The business community in most cities has considerable potential to influence and aid educational reform. However, to be effective and minimize resistance to change, it must convert its latent power into legitimate power.

The issues are both formal and informal, involving:

- Honoring the legally constituted processes of school governance, and operating as much as possible within policy frameworks established by legislators or school boards;
- Becoming knowledgeable about the interests of key parties to education reform; and
- Establishing bona fides by delivering as well as demanding.

5. In organizing for action, there are a number of options and no one best operating structure. The most common mistake is instituting some new structure without providing resources to follow through on the vision and its operating plan.

There are some considerations that are widely applicable. They include:

- Assessing the strength of existing organizations, and building on and using them whenever possible;
- Making sure resources are adequate to monitor the implementation plan; and
- Using intermediary organizations for collaborative programs.

6. The last issue, given far too little serious attention in most partnerships, is developing an evaluation strategy. Without one, it is very difficult to know whether progress is being made. We recommend:

- Analyzing whether the school system has the data base needed to provide adequate evaluation;
- Considering the viability of business assistance to the school system in developing better information systems for purposes of evaluation (and management);
- Enlisting the help of evaluation professionals in planning an assessment strategy;
- Adopting a three-tiered approach to evaluation, including assessment of overall school system improvement, the partnership strategy itself and the individual partnership programs; and
- Paying particular attention to developing improved measures of student learning.

To address the six strategic issues successfully requires commitment, endurance, time and resources. Yet by making the strategic choices soundly, business leaders can forge approaches to school change that will work.

The business community is ideally positioned to help local institutions and their leaders face these issues, and respond to them. Our hope is that this guide will encourage business leaders to act, and will help them chart their strategic choices well.

The Importance of Strategy

This guide is based on an optimistic premise: that the private sector, especially the business community, has great potential to be a driving force in major urban school reform, through involvement in local business/education partnerships. But it also reflects the conclusion, based on extensive site visits to and experience with well-regarded partnership efforts, that the promise of school/business partnerships vastly exceeds the performance to date.

We remain convinced that the promise may yet be realized: school/business partnerships in many cities have produced innovative and effective programs, and business has showed staying power. However, while often long on programs and patience, most school/business partnerships are short on strategy. While a strategy will often include programs, programs alone do not a strategy make.

Our work with four cities and recent visits to a dozen more convince us that the key to local school/business partnerships' success in achieving their potential as instruments of basic education reform is local business leaders' willingness to spend the time, thought and effort needed for success in addressing a series of *strategic questions* without which reform is unlikely to occur.

In this guide, which is addressed to business leaders interested in school reform, we attempt to identify those questions, review the success and failure in addressing them by business organizations in a number of cities, and suggest steps that both new and existing partnership organizations can take to learn from the past and speed the process of reform.

Defining the Terrain

There are literally thousands of school/business partnerships in the United States.

Most of them are what a study of partnerships conducted by Timpane and McNeill (1991) for the Committee for Economic Development (CED) called "helping-hand" partnerships; "Adopt-a-School" programs are the most common examples. Some have derided them as "feel good" programs, but the CED study noted that these partnerships don't hurt and some offer real help, though rarely in the realm of education itself. These efforts are typified by corporate support of ongoing extracurricular activities (e.g., buying band or athletic uniforms) and physical plant improvement (e.g., painting buildings or landscaping). They often substitute corporate money for dwindling school budgets so that popular activities or school image can be maintained. A few "helping-hand" partnerships have supported significant reform efforts, but they are the exception.

Other partnerships are what the Council for Aid to Education (1991) has called "project-driven." Here, one or more businesses join together (sometimes with the aid of colleges, local government, Private Industry Councils and others) to address a particular problem: education of "at-risk" youth, reform of vocational education, strengthening of science education and the like. These

"niche" partnerships often address important issues, and some have been quite successful. Like "Adopt-a-School" programs, they can play a supporting role in implementing more fundamental strategies for school reform.

For example, the business sector in several cities has formed partnerships to improve the school-to-work transition process, and to ensure that graduates of inner-city schools have a better shot at available jobs in the metropolitan region. Several of these initiatives have in fact increased the number of desirable entry-level employment opportunities for inner-city youth, though their record for affecting school practices to prepare youth for jobs is weak.

This guide alludes to ways in which "helping-hand" and "project-driven" partnerships can support reform, but they are not our primary interest. Rather, we focus on districtwide school/business initiatives whose goal is basic systemic reform, a phrase we define in Chapter II.

Note that we sometimes refer to "local business initiatives" and sometimes to "school/business partnerships." "Business initiatives" is the broader term, which may encompass partnerships but also includes efforts to press schools to reorient themselves toward change—the prerequisite to partnership. Ultimately, we believe, there must be commitment to change by both school systems and businesses if business is to play a role in implementing reform.

The Critical Strategic Questions

They are:

1. What is fundamental reform—and why is it needed?
2. How do you know a school system is ready for partnership—and what do you do if it is not?
3. What is the game plan for change? Specifically, when do you:
   - Push for state policy changes?
   - Press local systems to change?
   - Work to enable local systems to change?
   - Assist local systems with change?
   - Change the nature of business practices to institutionalize involvement with education, especially in occupationally oriented learning?
4. How do you convert the latent power of the business community into legitimate power as a major educational player?
5. How do you best organize to ensure an effective structure for collaboration and for breadth, depth and continuity of effort?
6. How do you evaluate progress?

In addressing these questions, it is important to bear in mind the issue of comparative advantage—specifically, the comparative advantage business groups bring as agents of change. Much of that advantage derives from business's power as consumers of the education system's products, as major taxpayers, and as civic/political players. While this power varies from city to city, it represents a potentially large advantage in helping business call the major questions and define the agenda for change.

However, the experience of the cities we have reviewed, as well as the broader literature on school/business partnerships, suggests that business must be modest about its comparative advantage in developing the power to force major structural reforms or to drive the implementation of change in school systems. It can be an important player in both, but it will almost certainly fail if it tries to go it alone. If reform is the goal, business requires allies—in the community, the school system or both. And, ultimately, dynamic local educational leadership is the fundamental prerequisite for change.

It is both intellectually and logistically complex to address these key strategic questions. They are intrinsically difficult questions, where legitimate differences of opinion exist. Good answers to these questions require a depth of knowledge of the issues, which few business leaders bring to the table when they first become involved. Further, few business leaders have the time to become personally knowledgeable enough to develop the depth of understanding that they would insist on in answering similar first-order questions about the enterprises they run.

In a few of the cities whose efforts we reviewed, it appeared that little or no thought had been given to some of these questions. More frequently, however, the process of arriving at answers to them had been a reiterative, evolutionary one: a business group arrives at a tentative answer; it starts down a road, only to find out it has reached a dead end; it changes its mind about, say, the readiness of the system for change, and tries a new road. The experience of the Boston Compact is a case in point: the first Compact was developed with an eagerly cooperative superintendent and an assumption that the system was ready to change. Seven years and two superintendents later, the business community took a different tack, working with the mayor and others to make basic changes in school governance—the manner of selection of the school board—and in the teachers' union contract as prerequisites to change, and to continued business involvement through Compact II.

It is probably inevitable that the process of developing answers to these questions will be messy; answers that seem good today will be questionable tomorrow. A strategic plan for school reform should be kept in a loose-leaf binder; like a strategic plan for business, it will need constant revision and refinement if it is to maintain relevance.

However, as examples we will cite in this guide indicate, the most effective partnerships are those that have, implicitly or explicitly, formulated effective answers to these questions. Conversely, those that have not often stumble, the result of failure to consider these fundamental strategic issues.

The most basic questions—i.e., what is your vision, or game plan, for fundamental reform, and is the school system ready for it?—are perhaps the hardest for business to answer, because business leaders are here venturing into unfamiliar terrain. Once involved in action—planning and implementing programs, restructuring organizations—they are on more familiar ground. Difficulty in addressing these first-order questions, in fact, has been an impediment in many of the cities with which we are familiar; so these questions will get the lion's share of our attention.

Most of this guide offers tips and examples of how to address these strategic questions (with occasional cautionary tales about how *not* to). But first, we address a more basic question: why local partnerships are critical.

Why Local Partnerships?

Local partnerships (or local business initiatives) are not the only form that business interventions in public education can or should take. Business has a stake in education policy discussions at the federal level, which is of increasing importance in setting the terms of the debate, and at the state level, where the Constitution assigns prime responsibility for educational policy. State government provides most of the funds, and establishes most of the rules. States define local governance structures (school boards); they establish minimum teacher certification requirements, tenure rules, course requirements, graduation requirements, length of the school year and more. While the breadth and power of the state role varies considerably from state to state, the most basic features of American schools, the hardwiring of the system, are contained in state law and regulation. In other words, to push for fundamental changes in schooling without becoming schooled and engaged in the politics and policies of education at the state level is to court failure. For better or worse, the reality is that in our complex federalist system of government, those who would effect far-reaching educational change must operate at several levels.

That said, the local level remains critically important. Many states have a strong tradition of localism in educational policy. In most, the local property tax remains a substantial base of funding. The local school board is not only the taxing authority but also the body with the most say over who gets hired and how the money gets spent. Even in states with weak local traditions, education either happens or does not happen classroom by classroom and school by school in the context of local systems. States can legislate, regulate, assist and monitor, but they do not do education. If business wants change, it has to be where education happens, and that is at the local level.

Indeed, we question how wisely or well business leaders will contribute at state or federal policy councils if they have not participated in the real work of school reform at the local level. Local reform efforts not only provide an important way for business leaders to affect the substance of school reform, but also provide an education for would-be reformers.

It is the experience of local reform efforts around the country that informs this guide, which now proceeds to suggest the steps that each local business community should take in developing its strategy for participating in school reform: identifying what reform is, deciding whether it is needed, developing a vision for reform, determining whether the school system is ready for it, and building a coalition for change (Chapter II); designing an action plan both for reform of teaching and learning, and for work force development (Chapter III); becoming a major player in the school reform effort (Chapter IV); organizing the partnership (Chapter V); and evaluating progress (Chapter VI).

Research for the guide included visits by P/PV staff to 10 cities whose school/business partnerships were reputed to be particularly focused on systemic reform, and particularly successful: Boston, Cincinnati, Louisville, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Portland (Or.), Prince George's County (Md.) and Seattle. The author also drew on his own experience in working with the cities of Philadelphia, New York and Indianapolis on business-led school reform efforts; and on P/PV's current experience in advising/evaluating the business- and foundation-sponsored Cleveland Initiative for Education. (Names and addresses of each of these initiatives can be found in Appendix A.) P/PV's earlier studies of school/business collaborations include a review for the National Alliance of Business of its effort to help seven cities replicate the Boston Compact in 1988, and a 1985 survey of nine major school/business partnerships, *Allies in Education: Schools and Businesses Working Together for At-Risk Youth*.

Developing **Strate**
First Steps

The logical first questions business must address are: What does fundamental reform mean? Is fundamental reform needed? And is the school system ready and willing to enter into a partnership aimed at fundamental reform?

These are not easy questions to answer. There are competing ideas of what is meant by "fundamental reform," as well as different dimensions of reform.

Defining Fundamental Reform

Organizational changes represent a starting point for a reform agenda, and are especially critical in big cities, whose educational systems tend to be enmeshed in labyrinthine bureaucracies, where jockeying for turf rivals concern for student needs, and compliance with central policies is often bought at the price of concern for results.

Reforming Management

If education research establishes anything with certainty, it is that good schools are schools where principals, teachers and parents, and sometimes students—but most essentially, the school staff—are deeply and thoughtfully engaged in diagnosing and meeting the educational challenges presented by their students. As Max Weber (1922) warned long ago, such thoughtful engagement is almost inevitably the casualty of overly centralized bureaucracies, the more so as they grow in size.

There may be occasional exceptions to the need to decentralize and liberate schools from bureaucracy, e.g., where systems are in chaos and need to be reined in centrally. And some crucial functions must remain central responsibilities, such as setting basic standards and output measures, and allocating resources. But most discussions of change in the organization and governance of school start with the need for some sort of decentralization, pushing educational decision-making down the line. This pattern echoes similar moves to restructure and decentralize decision-making in many corporations.

Although there is widespread agreement on the need for decentralization, there are different views about how to achieve it. Major concepts (sometimes viewed as competing, sometimes as complementary) include:

- Various forms of choice (ranging from choice within public schools to voucher plans that include private schools), an idea that attracts at least some business leaders in every city;
- Radical decentralization, such as the legislated creation of school boards with majority parent representation and decentralization of many personnel, policy and budgeting issues to the schools, as required by the Illinois legislature in Chicago, with strong backing from business leaders who, like many in that city, had concluded that the central bureaucracy was a monster that had to be destroyed;

- "Restructuring" for school-based management or shared decision-making, loosely analogous to corporate approaches to trimming central staff and pushing decisions out to the plant or local branch office, an approach supported by most of the school/business partnerships we reviewed; and
- Establishing better systems of accountability, to create a results- and output-oriented culture in bureaucracies primarily concerned with inputs and regulatory compliance—an emphasis that complements decentralization, which, in any form, risks chaos in the absence of solid community-wide measures with which to gauge performance.

Reforming the Delivery System

Another dimension of reform focuses on changing the basic inputs and/or redrawing the habitual boundaries of schooling. These efforts challenge such fundamental—but arguably dysfunctional— "one-size-fits-all" habits as the uses of time (e.g., school starting and leaving ages; traditional school years; all subjects taught in one-period blocks of unvarying length); personnel deployment (e.g., one teacher teaches one class of fixed size for one year); and, perhaps most important, boundaries between school and home, school and community, and school and other institutions (e.g., social service agencies, colleges, businesses) that often have as much or more influence on youth development than the school itself.

Variations that have found support in some locales include:

- Abandoning the "agrarian" calendar in favor of year-round schooling, to increase learning time and eliminate "summer learning loss" (Heyns, 1987);
- Assigning a teacher to a class for more than one year, or a group of subject-matter teachers to a group of students for several years, to strengthen the adult/child relationships that promote learning, and to reduce time lost in transitions from class to class;
- Integrating academic and vocational instruction, such as that found in occupationally focused academies, cooperative education, tech-prep or newly designed youth apprenticeship initiatives;
- Expanding early childhood education programs and providing a range of child and family health, psychological and social services, either on the school site or through close coordination of schools and human service agencies, to improve student readiness for learning;
- Educating whole families—parents, students, students with young children—in the same program, especially in communities with large concentrations of adults with limited educational backgrounds, as a way to create more supportive home environments for learning;
- Toughening course and content requirements—e.g., requiring more years of math or science to graduate; and
- Expanding programs, with business involvement, that address the frequently ignored education-for-employment needs of the "forgotten half" of students: students who will enter the work force, not college, when they leave high school.

CASE IN POINT: Flattening the Organization

The legislated decentralization of the Chicago schools is a dramatic recent example of an effort to break up a head office bureaucracy. But Jefferson County, Ky., which includes Louisville, offers an even more radical approach to flattening the organization. There, Superintendent Don Ingwerson all but stood the hierarchy on its head by having all 157 school principals report directly to him. Central offices that once had line authority are now clearly staff offices whose mission is to support the schools. The basic ground rule is that if a principal needs help, he or she calls the appropriate central staff office. If not satisfied, the next call is to the superintendent—what Louisville has dubbed the "two-call" system of administration. One form of central help: schools seeking businesses or other partners to help with some aspect of management or program request them and central staff seeks an appropriate partner. So far, more than 800 have been found.

Cincinnati, too, has upended the bureaucracy, following recommendations made by the chairman of the board of Fifth Third Bancorp, who headed the Cincinnati Business Committee Task Force on Public Schools. In what the local press called a "bombshell" dropped in May 1992, the superintendent announced that responsibility for education and management would be split between himself and a new vice president for business operations; that area superintendents, and the entire departments of administration, curriculum and instruction would be eliminated; and that principals would report directly to the superintendent or his deputy. The teachers' union president approved: "The tangled mess is gone." So did the head of the administrators' association!

Reforming Teaching and Learning

The rationale for these changes is that they will facilitate changes in teaching and learning. But there is a tendency on the part of business leaders to shy away from questions of teaching and learning, viewing them as the province of professional educators. We think this is a mistake. The real bottom line in education lies in the classroom.

Widespread concerns cited by employers in surveys and shared by many educators and researchers are that recent graduates do not think well, analyze and solve problems well, nor work together well in teams. One very basic reason for this is that students are not given many opportunities to do any of these things in school. Rather, as studies by John Goodlad (1984), Theodore Sizer (1984) and others have made clear, teacher- and lecture-dominated classes where desk-bound students are expected to memorize and regurgitate represent over 90 percent of class time in the schools.

Without becoming experts in pedagogy, business leaders can understand the limits of such pedagogy. They can support strategies that plausibly lead to greater emphasis on instructional approaches that engage students as "workers" in the grand project of their own education, for example:

- Dialogue and discussion about open-ended problems or issues that have no clear "right" answer;
- Projects that draw on students' own experiences to engage them in defining problems, identifying resources for their solution, conducting research and analyzing options;
- Application of technology to the analysis and solution of problems;
- Interdisciplinary approaches in which skills or knowledge traditionally taught in isolation are applied to the content of other fields: for example, using historical analysis to discuss a novel, using science problems to teach math problem-solving, etc.;
- Experiential education, from "hands-on" science to community service to work experience, as a way to enable students to learn how to apply knowledge and skills in the "real world," not merely provide answers to questions about them in the classroom; and
- Ample opportunities for teams to collaborate in wrestling with the content of problems, an approach that not only develops teamwork but taps the enormous potential of peers to learn from and teach each other.

In reality, it is no harder to tell whether active, engaging, cognitively complex work is going on in a classroom than it is to tell whether a work team in a factory or office is engaged in trying to improve quality and productivity. As these examples suggest, a little systematic observation makes both obvious.

The purpose of all this, of course, is to achieve better outcomes—students not just staying in school, but being able to demonstrate the skills, knowledge and ability that are required in life and at work.

Answering the First Question: Is Fundamental Reform Needed?

In most of the cities in which we have observed school/business collaborations, business had come to a rough and ready consensus that the answer to this question was "yes," and many had thought through with some care at least one or two aspects of what they meant by fundamental reform. However, we concluded that few sites had a fully satisfactory, broadly shared, multidimensional vision of reform in place.

The key to developing an adequate answer to the question lies in specifying exactly what is currently wrong. In some cities, even though the rhetoric sometimes incorporated talk of fundamental reform, the implicit or explicit definition of the problem revealed a less than sweeping analysis.

In several cities in particular, the analysis of what is wrong focused on educational failure among disadvantaged youth, without giving much if any attention to the larger question of whether those failures were embedded in deeper systemic problems.

In most cities, the high dropout rates, low daily attendance and poor academic achievement of disadvantaged students is assuredly the most glaring problem. But lost in the glare of the obvious can be the question of whether what is needed to benefit these youth is a set of categorical interventions or something deeper.

Implicitly, if not explicitly, most school/business partnerships that focus on disadvantaged youth are saying three things:

- That the problem lies more with the youth (or their families) than with the educational system;
- That the normative outcomes of schooling in America (norms disadvantaged youth often fail to achieve) are okay: e.g., that achieving "grade level" (i.e., the median score on the bell-shaped curve for students in a given grade) on standardized tests, or a dropout rate no worse than the national average, are the goals of school reform; and
- That some added services, incentives and changes in the education program for disadvantaged youth are sufficient to solve the problem.

Where these views have been embraced, the tendency of business is to base hopes for reform on such initiatives as expanded early childhood education, coordinated social services, job-readiness courses for disadvantaged youth, parental involvement activities, student achievement incentives (from prizes and recognition to guaranteed jobs and college scholarship programs), mentoring and other forms of direct engagement in youth development.

CASE IN POINT: From Success to Reassessment

The Portland Investment has received considerable national acclaim. It was developed eight years ago by the Leaders Roundtable, a prestigious group whose members included top local elected officials and the superintendent of schools. Driven by a concern for the high unemployment rates of disadvantaged youth, the group conducted a thoughtful analysis of youth needs and inventoried available resources for meeting those needs. The result was a set of well-designed, well-managed and well-evaluated employment and social service programs for at-risk youth, funded and mounted through a collaboration of city and county governments, the Private Industry Council, the schools and private industry. In many ways, this was an exemplary initiative well ahead of its time. A number of other cities have since used Portland as a model, in part, for their own efforts, including Minneapolis, Seattle and Pittsburgh. But in 1990, Roundtable members, prodded by former mayor and governor Neil Goldschmidt, took stock of their considerable accomplishments and realized that they had a long way to go. They concluded that, because of limited resources, only 10 percent of youth they classified as "at risk" were being served. They further posited that the only way to serve all youth and prevent the kinds of problems that put teenagers at risk, and thus in need of services, was to institute more fundamental school reform—a goal now being addressed.

In fact, research gives at least some reason to believe that each of these (better in combination than alone) can help produce improvements—albeit generally modest improvements—in the performance of disadvantaged students in one or more of the normative standards by which we traditionally judge performance. Arguably, some or all of these special supports for disadvantaged students should be part of any fundamental reform effort. But fundamental reform they are not, for reasons both obvious and subtle:

- The norms, and the measures on which they are based, are of dubious adequacy: being at grade level does not mean much when U.S. students appear to trail students in most industrialized nations in key subjects; and scores on multiple-choice standardized tests do not correlate well to the ability to solve problems and apply knowledge outside the classroom.
- Augmenting services or providing incentives for the disadvantaged fails to address most of the dimensions of fundamental reform sketched out earlier—especially improved instructional practice.
- More subtly, as education critics like Henry Levin (1985, 1987, 1988, 1991) have argued, schools in many ways seem to be, for the disadvantaged, factories for failure. For example, once they fall behind, students are typically fed watered-down curricula at slow rates that ensure they will fall further behind. There is little reason to believe that initiatives aimed at marginal improvements in services to those students will do more than marginally reduce failure rates.

In short, one way for business to get at the question of whether fundamental reform is needed is to answer the following further questions:

1. Are education outcomes satisfactory for the *average-to-best* students? If not, some version of fundamental reform is probably needed.
2. If dissatisfaction stems primarily from the problems of *disadvantaged* students, is there strong reason to believe that augmentation of the current school program will result in quantum leaps in their school performance? If not, some version of fundamental reform is probably needed.
3. Do most classrooms and courses in the school system offer the kinds of learning experiences and employ the kinds of curriculum and instruction that will maximize critical thinking, problem-solving, teamwork and the capacity to learn to learn? If not, some version of fundamental reform is needed.
4. Is the current organization and governance of the school system capable of producing the needed changes at the classroom level? If not, some version of fundamental reform is probably needed.

Developing a Vision of Reform

Cities with the most fully developed visions of reform tend to be those where the reform agenda was developed and articulated by the superintendent of schools, then supported by the business community.

Cincinnati is a notable exception. Stimulated by a grant from the National Alliance of Business as part of its multisite effort to replicate the Boston Compact, the Cincinnati Youth Collaborative (CYC) was born in 1986 of deliberations by a number of committees that comprised a considerable cross-section of the community, especially business leaders, school administrators, representatives of higher education, local elected officials and the United Way.

These deliberations, augmented by site visits to Boston and other cities, were influenced by a 1985 Committee for Economic Development (CED) report developed under the leadership of Owen B. Butler, then chairman of Cincinnati's largest company, Procter & Gamble. Cincinnati's deliberations resulted in development of a number of programs addressing key problems (e.g., mentoring, "last-dollar" scholarships, support of job-readiness training and a Boston-like "guaranteed jobs" program) embedded in a broader reform strategy whose main elements, consistent with CED thinking, included expansion of early childhood education and development of a "model" school district, consisting of one high school and its feeder schools. It was hoped that this would point the way to school-based management.

Although there were subsequent obstacles to implementing this vision—some caused by failure to involve teachers, principals, parents and community representatives from the model district in formulating plans—the participatory process Cincinnati followed had some strong advantages. A large number of people did develop a shared vision, many continued to be involved in helping implement it, and a substantial sum—$7 million—was raised from private sources to support the first three years of the CYC's existence.

In most sites, however, there is little evidence of significant systematic business/community involvement in developing a vision of reform. Most business and community groups have deferred to the superintendent, have deferred to staff hired to run the partnership, or have failed to develop a coherent vision at all. Deferring to a superintendent or even to knowledgeable staff may be a viable way to proceed, at least in the short run. But in the long run, it is problematic. If the superintendent or the partnership staff leave (as has or will soon have happened in more than half the 14 cities we recently visited), or if the staff head and the superintendent are in conflict, the business community faces a quandary that, lacking a clear vision of what it wants, it may not easily resolve. Further, without a vision shared by a substantial number of business leaders, business/community effectiveness is likely to be undermined over time by fragmentation of effort or lack of commitment.

The sites with the least well-developed visions appear also to be those that have spent the most time (and money) spinning wheels. Not knowing where they wanted to go, they didn't know how to get there.

The lesson is that a fair degree of time and effort should be spent up front to educate the business community on how schools work and to develop a

shared vision of reform. Alternatives should be explored, contrary views considered and a more-than-cursory analysis of information (numerical data, interview data, possibly data from commissioned studies) should be undertaken. A participatory process, involving groups and individuals whose support is likely to be needed to effect change, is highly desirable; however, it is likely that at some point, business leaders will need to caucus by themselves to assure a full and candid discussion of the options—otherwise, there is the risk that their support will amount to little more than lip service.

There is always the risk that a process of this sort can be too protracted and complex, but we have found no examples of such a case. Rather, our sense is that most business groups move too quickly in their desire to get moving and get something accomplished. The results are either actions—in the form of programs—that are at best marginally related to reform, or fragmentation of effort, or conflict with school authorities caused by too cursory development of the basic assumptions required by a true partnership.

New business groups developing a vision—or old ones revising theirs—need not reinvent the wheel. While it is almost never possible to import or replicate another city's reform strategy or programs lock, stock and barrel, there is much to be learned from the experience of others. There are organizations, such as Theodore Sizer's Coalition of Essential Schools, Henry Levin's Accelerated Schools and Marc Tucker's National Center on Education and the Economy, that combine thoughtful—and quite distinctive—visions of educational reform with practical experience in implementing them. There are school systems that have substantial experience attempting to implement school-based management from which much can be learned about what works—and what doesn't. Louisville, San Diego, Miami, Rochester and Edmonton (Alberta) are among the pioneers.

Similarly, the choice debate is no longer simply a question of theory and ideology. The experiences of other cities and the reports of business organizations, such as CED, are available. There are choice plans in Milwaukee, Minnesota, Cambridge (Mass.) and East Harlem (N.Y.), as well as the full-fledged voucher plan implemented in England, from whose experience much can be learned about the merits—and limitations—of applying the market analogy to schools.

Personal visits to these locations are highly recommended for business groups trying to develop a vision. They give education and business leaders the opportunity to develop, share and debate ideas with greater candor and less defensiveness (on the part of local school officials, at least) than is likely to result from deliberations that are simply focused inward or on the deficiencies of the local schools.

At the same time, it is important not to ignore local resources. Teachers, administrators, college professors, consultants and others in a fledgling collaboration's home city can have ideas as powerful as anyone's, and usually know far better than outsiders what it will take to make things work at home.

Answering the Second Question: Is the School System Ready for Fundamental Reform?

Although the question of school system readiness seems obvious, three of the cities we observed learned the importance of addressing this question the hard way: business groups talking major reform started several programs, only to find that the school system could easily absorb the programs without taking any real steps toward reform. In all three cases, this eventually led the business community to support efforts to replace the superintendent and/or school board, leaving a group of partially implemented programs scattered on the ground while the challenge of developing a shared reform agenda remained unaddressed.

If the Board of Education, the superintendent, the teachers' union and the business group all agree on at least the broad outlines of reform and the need for it, the question has been answered and the development of an action plan can begin. But if all the power players have circled their wagons, insisting that everything's really fine (a common form of this insistence is "if only the press publicized the good things about this system..."), and preferring the business group to either go away or confine itself to small "helping-hand" partnerships, the question has also been answered. The business group can either bide its time, look for ways to work with other participants in the education endeavor (e.g., teachers, community representatives), or start working for a change in school system leadership.

More likely, however, things will not be so clear-cut. It is probable that one or more of the triumvirate of educational powers will not be reform-minded, a serious obstacle in the public arena, where the power to veto is commonly spread among many parties. It is also quite likely that the major power players' individual visions of reform will not be entirely consistent.

In either of these likely instances, the following tactical questions must be answered before business proceeds with strategic development:

- Does business have the clout/ability to change the recalcitrant party (or parties) as a step prior to partnership? Or,
- Can business ignore the potential obstacle and move ahead until either it changes its position or the business effort gains enough momentum to force change? Or,
- Does business choose to work with the potential obstacle, focusing on areas where agreement is possible, building relationships and trust that in time will permit business to influence the other party(ies)?

How these questions are answered depends entirely on a careful assessment of local circumstances. In one city, business leaders had respect for the superintendent as a leader even though they had misgivings about the adequacy of her strategy. But they worked together in areas of common agreement. Over time, its staff director believes, the partnership was among the influences that caused the superintendent to move from a very centralized reform agenda, tinged with antagonism toward the union, to a strategy of restructuring for school-based management with cooperation from the union—a strategy strongly supported by most of the business leadership.

In other cities, the mayor has played a role in breaking logjams, bringing the players to the table or acting as a power broker when business is "stuck" or needs additional political leverage. In Boston, for example, it was the mayor who pushed for the change from an elected to an assigned school board membership; in Seattle, the mayor worked with the business community to organize an education summit and champion a tax levy for school support services.

There is a strong tendency in some cities for the business community to ignore the school board and focus on the superintendent. This is partly attributable to the proclivity of executives for dealing with other executives, but it may also suggest a reluctance to get involved in local politics—e.g., school board election or selection processes. In cases where the board is strongly united behind a superintendent who is working for reform, this may present no immediate problems. But in the long run—and sometimes in the short run—ignoring the governing body of a school system creates problems.

In particular, the board's power to hire and fire superintendents—a high-turnover position—is critical in determining whether the superintendent shares the reform agenda of the business community. As the cases highlighted here illustrate, boards often do not work to ensure that the superintendent supports the agenda—either because the business community has failed to develop a shared understanding with the board, or because board members have a different sense—perhaps hostile to the business community's—of what is needed.

Unlike members of corporate boards, school board members are political figures with their own power bases and agendas. They frequently operate independently of the superintendent, and even if they assent to the policies of management, they might not endorse them. In addition, they rarely pay attention to planning for succession and continuity of leadership. The long timelines required for educational reform make it essential that there be some continuity of effort between superintendents, suggesting the importance of business working with the school board and others to assure this continuity as part of its strategy.

More powerful in some cities than others, the teachers' union is another member of the ruling triumvirate in most urban school systems. Business leaders tend to avoid working directly with the leadership of these unions. This is a mistake. The power of teachers' unions exceeds the strength industrial unions bring to the bargaining table; they represent a well-educated, fairly affluent, politically active group of professionals whose job security, given tenure laws, is all but absolute and whose political muscle can and often does affect the outcome of school board elections, as well as legislative and mayoral elections.

CASE IN POINT: Long Memories and Original Sin

In one city, the business community's initiative has its roots in a citywide conference held to discuss what had to be done to change the schools. An eager business community set up an organization and raised funds to work on school reform, but there was a small problem. No member of the school board was invited to participate in the conference. To this day, four years and three superintendents later, the initial hostility this omission engendered has been partly responsible for the business community's inability to engage school authorities in productive dialogue.

CASE IN POINT: New Leadership Leads to Success

In the late 1970s, a federal court's desegregation order forced the merger of the Louisville (Ky.) city schools with suburban schools in the balance of Jefferson County. Business leadership saw the turmoil that resulted—white flight, conflict over implementing the court order—as a major community challenge that called for new leadership. Business rallied to address divisiveness in the community and the Chamber of Commerce paid for a management study of the schools. It concluded that changes in leadership were essential. This study provided important ammunition as the Chamber and other groups pushed for a new superintendent. The school board concurred on the need and hired a superintendent with a strong reform agenda. Twelve years later, Louisville has instituted some of the most far-reaching reforms, including school-based management and extensive use of technology, and has some of the best results of any urban school system—e.g., a low dropout rate and SAT scores above the national norm. Business has played a key supporting role throughout, responding to the quest for partnerships that was a key component of the superintendent's plan.

It is important to understand that the deeper source of union power in many cities is that the union is viewed by many teachers as the only legitimate education organization in their community, the only voice they can trust. If the union does not support a partnership aimed at reform, the teachers will not do so, and their opposition—whether expressed in political action or in inaction in the privacy of their classrooms—will probably doom reform.

If the board and superintendent are not sympathetic to business's reform vision, it would obviously be premature to set up a partnership. The tough question then becomes whether the business community is willing to work for replacement of the superintendent, a task that will in some cases require the prior step of working to install a school board that will hire a superintendent who shares business's reform vision.

The name of the game, in this case, is politics, and how it should be played varies too widely from situation to situation to justify offering guidance on tactics. But one basic caution applies widely: if the business group is going after a superintendent's head, backing a slate for the school board, or both, it is desirable to have allies. Ultimately, the best chance for success in the search for personnel and basic policy changes lies in community consensus.

In five cities we observed, the business community at one time or another became involved in efforts to change the superintendent; in three of those five cities, it was also involved in efforts either to elect a slate of business-backed candidates to the board, or to replace an entire board by changing its method of selection. The results of these efforts to become politically active have been mixed, but there is a pattern associated with success.

The common denominator of success when business groups have effected changes in leadership—on the board, in the superintendency, or both—has been coalition-building, with the elected political leadership of the city a vital ally.

CASE IN POINT: The Union Makes Us Strong

The first action of the business-led Committee to Support the Philadelphia Public Schools was creation of a non-profit organization (called PATHS/PRISM) to involve arts and science professors, staff of cultural organizations, and business professionals in working with teachers on curriculum and professional development. The teachers' union was involved from the outset. Its president was on the board and a second union official served on the search committee that hired the first executive director, who emphasized from the start that the organization's programs would be teacher-centered. As a matter of policy, PATHS/PRISM programs were typically co-led by a teacher and a university professor. In short order, the combination of intellectually rigorous programming and teacher empowerment, which became the hallmark of programs, gained PATHS/PRISM an enthusiastic constituency among the best and brightest of the system's teachers. In time, the organization grew to an annual budget of over $4 million, serving as many as 1,500 teachers a year. With strong backing from the superintendent and the teachers' union, it was soon responsible for most of the in-service training and curriculum development in the system, which eliminated most of its central curriculum office. The union president credits the organization with paving the way for union support of school-based management in Philadelphia, an initiative in which PATHS/PRISM is now playing an important supportive role.

Building a Coalition for Change

School systems are public bodies that respond to multiple, frequently conflicting, public pressures and interests, both internal and external. The result, as political scientists John Chubb and Terry Moe (1990) argue, is frequently an equilibrium that resembles a stand-off: in developing responses to ward off everyone, they please no one. Even with the support of a superintendent and the school board, changing this stolid inertia to create momentum for reform is no easy matter. It requires powerful mass and continuous energy. As the director of one partnership put it, "We've been shaking the tree for five years, and the leaves are rustling, but the trunk hasn't budged."

It is for this reason that it takes a strong and sustained coalition of forces to make the changes needed to get an entrenched system ready for reform. If the political climate in a city permits, building such a coalition may be fairly easy. That is, if there is widespread public disgust with the schools, if elected political officials—particularly the mayor—are supportive of change, if the newspapers are on the attack, business leaders simply need to figure out who the allies are and take appropriate action.

In some cases, appropriate action may mean pressuring the school board to hire a new superintendent. In others, it may mean electing a slate of reform-minded board members who can make sure there is a reform-minded superintendent. In still other cases—depending on both the vision of reform and the local situation—it may mean legislative action or a voter referendum to make a basic change in the governance system, as was the case in Boston and Chicago.

In almost all cities where the business community was successful in electing board members, replacing superintendents or changing the governance structure, the business community had substantial prior involvement in education issues. That is, it had earned recognition as an important voice in educational affairs and was not viewed as a usurper or the "new kid on the block." Undoubtedly, this history helped give it weight and influence in the coalition. But it is also true that, as we noted earlier, the ability to call for reform is one form of power that comes fairly easily to the business community and, indeed, may be its most important role in actually achieving reform.

In cities where apathy reigns, the task of developing a coalition with sufficient clout to force reform is more difficult. Here, the first step becomes raising public awareness and support for change. In Seattle, Milwaukee and Cleveland, the business community has had some success in creating a climate for change through such means as holding or participating in communitywide education summits, and conducting a series of research studies of the school system and media campaigns, all of which had high visibility and began to make the need for fundamental reform an issue.

Probably the best example of developing a broad-based and powerful coalition for change comes from a state, not a city. Then South Carolina Governor Richard Riley, with important support from a blue-ribbon group of business leaders, orchestrated a massive and masterful campaign to build an irresistible base of support for the sweeping and widely hailed changes incorporated in a

1984 education reform act. Intensive communications and extensive vehicles for participation—more than 13,000 people were involved—enabled a leadership group that included business, education and government not simply to pass a far-reaching bill, but also to begin implementation with widespread understanding and approval of the goals and strategies embodied in the legislation.

Clearly, if the system itself is not ready for reform, and if reform is not on the public agenda, the road to change may be long and rocky. But it is not impossible to build a vision, build an alliance to promote that vision, and create preconditions for action.

CASE IN POINT: Politics after Patience

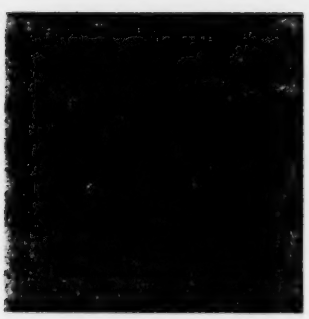
In Boston, after years of frustration at lack of change in the school system, business leaders of the Boston Compact came to the conclusion that the non-educational political agendas of school board members made substantive progress on school reform next to impossible. They joined with the mayor in supporting a successful referendum that changed the nature of the school board, from an elected board to a mayor-appointed board, with a key figure in the Compact's development serving as a board member.

CASE IN POINT: Victory . . . or Pyrrhic Victory?

In City X, the business community played hardball. Initially, it made unusually intense efforts to develop a broad consensus on a reform agenda and raised millions to fund key reform programs. At the outset, the superintendent, who was new to the city, appeared to be supportive, but in time it became clear that her ideas and those of the business community were fundamentally different. She was a centralizer who thought the business role should be limited to "support"—i.e., giving money and PR assistance. Business leaders were pushing for decentralization and wanted to be active players in shaping it. Matters were not helped by a fractious school board. Several years and several million dollars later, business leaders began a concerted effort to make changes in the board and superintendency. They began backing candidates for the school board, and captured three of seven seats. They threatened the board with opposition to a tax referendum—possibly forcing the district into a severe deficit—if it did not develop a unified front (which most board members read as code for supporting business's reform program). And when the board ousted the superintendent (who had few supporters anywhere in the community), the business slate, plus one other board member, voted in the business community's candidate—by a one-vote majority. None of this was achieved without cost, however: the board is still divided, along racial lines, and it remains to be seen whether the new superintendent has the skills and mandate to lead a reform effort (or whether the tax referendum would get business support and pass).

From Vision to **Actio**

The Game Plan **for** **C**nge



In moving from a vision of reform to an action plan to achieve it, there are three broad strategic tasks to be accomplished:

1. Developing an action agenda sufficient to promote systemic reform,
2. Developing/legitimating the power needed to be an effective actor, and
3. Organizing for action.

Developing an Action Agenda

A vision of reform remains just a gleam in the eye, of course, without an action plan to implement it. Assuming a school system is ready for partnership, the development of a game plan is the next strategic issue.

In developing such a plan, there are limits to the role business can play, since most of the resources, knowledge and responsibility for designing and implementing a reform strategy lie, inevitably, with school authorities. It is clear that this was the case in cities where the school system and the business community are harmonious partners in reform—e.g., Louisville, Prince George's County and Portland. But there is much business can do to influence the shape and quality of the plan, to serve as a watchdog or monitor for its effectiveness, and to assist in implementing it. Such assistance need not be limited to programs or technical assistance serving students or school personnel. Rather, it may—and probably should—include business changing its own practices to institutionalize business involvement in education, especially in occupationally oriented education.

Like the development of a vision, development of a game plan is likely to be an evolutionary process. The task is complex; there are no proven models of success to guide action; the political environment is in constant flux; and even the data on which to base a plan—and assess progress toward its implementation—are frequently lacking. Learning by doing is the name of the game. Business, too, operates in fluid environments, where plans must stay flexible; but the degree of fluidity and uncertainty involved in school reform is still startling to many business leaders.

Demanding Coherence

While recognizing the impediments to rational, analytic, up-front planning, business members of a partnership should nevertheless push for a coherent, well-developed and analytically sound action plan, with:

- Well-specified goals and objectives;
- Action plans for meeting those objectives;
- Identified resources needed to meet them;
- A system of accountability for who does what;
- Timetables; and
- Benchmarks for gauging progress.

Such a plan should be clear on roles the respective partners will play in implementing the plan, and how the resources that business is devoting to the effort, whether cash or in-kind, will be targeted to priority actions central to the plan's success.

The process of developing a plan is in many ways as important as the product. In particular, the "right people" must be included, by which we mean:

- Leaders from the business community and other sectors who have the prestige to help the plan gain acceptance and the clout to ensure that attention is paid to it;
- Key representatives of those who will be affected by the plan—whether school administrators, elected officials, teachers, parents, social service agencies or others—to create the sense of ownership that is indispensable to action in the public sector; and
- Individuals with knowledge of research and the technical skills required to design effective strategies and programs.

These points may seem obvious, but in many sites we have studied, the obvious seems to have been ignored. From an urge to do something, some cities have jumped to implement programs without really thinking through the relationships of the program to reform, without developing ownership on the part of those whose involvement was key to implementation, or without carefully considering what research and seasoned practitioners know about best practices. Not surprisingly, such efforts had little to show for themselves.

In particular, we saw lots of dollars and energy going into such programs as mentoring, teacher recognition, guaranteed jobs, or scholarship funds—programs that, however admirable in themselves, are not necessarily connected to the core business of school reform.

Such programs may complement school reform. They may benefit individual students and provide an outlet for corporate philanthropic impulses. They may also help the business community develop goodwill and the credibility needed to be effective advocates and participants in more fundamental school reform. For example, teacher recognition programs or "mini-grants" to teachers can help business develop trust and a working relationship with the teachers' union. Sometimes, such programs may indeed support more fundamental reform—e.g., scholarships or guaranteed jobs programs may be the capstone of a series of incentives for student achievement. But they are not a substitute for systemic school reform—reform aimed ultimately at changing what happens in the classroom, with corollary changes, as needed, in governance, the basic parameters of schooling, and the relationships between schools, families and other youth-serving agencies, such as social service providers.

The action plan for a partnership aimed at reform should specify the respective responsibilities of all partners: the schools, the business community, and other involved organizations, such as city government or colleges and universities.

The Business Community's Roles

In addition to pushing for coherence in the overall plan of the school system and its partners, the major task of the business community is figuring out its role, its responsibilities and how it will proceed.

Business can play one or more of the following roles:

A *watchdog* role, monitoring and assessing overall progress toward implementing the reform process—a role much enhanced if there is clarity on performance indicators and a timetable for implementation.

A *supportive* role, providing resources and assistance as requested by school authorities on an ongoing or ad hoc basis. For example, in Milwaukee, Louisville, Cleveland and other cities, business organizations have been paired with schools, offering everything from training and organizational consulting to funding and other supports of programs that those schools have developed. In some cities (e.g., Seattle, Milwaukee and Prince George's County), business has responded to requests for studies or management assistance in developing information systems, benefit cost containment, public relations, training of managers, and other functions where corporate expertise matches well with school system management tasks.

A *convening* role, bringing together colleges, governmental agencies, cultural organizations or others to facilitate and broker their collaboration with the school system in providing teacher training, curriculum development, educational services or other activities supporting school reform. Notable examples of business in this type of role include the intergovernmental Portland Investment and Philadelphia's PATHS/PRISM. In neither of these cases does business play a leading role in funding, designing or delivering services; instead, it helps provide something equally critical: the glue that holds collaboratives together, and the high-level support needed to focus attention on collaborative activities.

An *advocacy* role, which may involve lobbying for additional funding for education; pushing for regulatory or legislative changes; or urging the school board, the superintendent, the teachers' union or other groups to support a particular reform strategy. Success stories of this type include the role business leaders active in the Cincinnati Youth Collaborative played in getting the governor and the state legislature to support additional funding for early childhood education programs, and the role of business leaders in Boston in getting the teachers' union to support school-based management in its contract as a precondition for continuation of the Boston Compact.

An *agent's* role, in which, either as collaborator or as lead entity, business takes a hand in implementing some aspect of school reform, as discussed in the following section.

CASE IN POINT: Sorting Out the Essential and the Desirable

Special business efforts to facilitate school-to-work transition for non-college-bound students and to assist individual schools with corporate financial and human resources are certainly desirable, but do they contribute to—or even bolster—systemwide change? Cleveland's experience says no. That city's Education Partners and School-to-Work programs operate successfully and seem to benefit some individual students and schools. But the business end of the partnerships, which started out in pursuit of improved student performance, has not been involved in such a way as to make that goal achievable. The individual programs, then, remain just that: helpful adjuncts rather than strategic components of systemic improvement.

CASE IN POINT: To the Hustings

John Murphy was hired as superintendent of the Prince George's County (Md.) schools with a mandate to change a district widely perceived as being in serious decline. Murphy had strong ideas about how to improve education, but he was concerned that pervasive negativity about the schools, in the community as well as the school system, was a serious barrier to change. He turned to the Advisory Council for Business and Industry (ACBI), a nonprofit organization with 100 corporate members from across the county and other parts of metropolitan Washington, established to develop partnerships with the school system. Convincing them that he was serious about school reform, he also convinced them that changing the image could help pave the way for changing the schools. The result was an award-winning media campaign, which the ACBI oversaw and for which it raised over $250,000. The ads, public service spots and videos produced in this campaign typically confronted the problems head on, then gave them a positive twist. So, for example, a TV spot that began with a picture of graffiti ended up featuring the work of a prize-winning student artist. Eight years later, key business leaders credit Murphy with having delivered on many aspects of education reform, and there is consensus that the ad campaign helped the new superintendent launch his reform program successfully.

Business as an Agent of Work Force Development

If there is one area in which an overwhelming case can be made that business should become an active agent in almost every city, it is the area of work force development. The self-interest of business is clear, as is its responsibility to address this issue. So the need for business involvement is self-evident. The centrality to global competitiveness of improving the quality of the work force—especially semiskilled, skilled and technical workers—is well-established. And, concerning tomorrow's work force, the demographic imperative is well-known: a large percentage of the available new entrants to the work force will be minority and disadvantaged youth, especially in urban areas.

Compared with our major competitor nations, the United States does a poor job of easing the transition to work for non-college-bound youth—which, in urban areas, is frequently the majority of youth. By contrast to other nations, our system is "haphazard," as a General Accounting Office study (1990) put it, "without a coherent overall strategy." The Commission on the Skills of the American Work Force, in its influential 1990 report, *America's Choice*, put it more strongly: it is "the worst school-to-work transition system of any advanced industrial nation."

Despite this sorry state of affairs, there is at least broad understanding of what must be done to improve work force preparation and the school-to-work transition, and there are even some well-evaluated models on which to build a better system. In particular:

- Occupationally oriented programs must be used—not simply to develop job skills, but even more important, as the context for teaching higher-level cognitive skills.
- Disadvantaged youth, in particular, require a broad range of experiences that expose them to the workplace, and help them develop knowledge of careers and the requisites of being a productive worker. Career days, internships, community service and a variety of other "hands-on" experiences can all help, but nothing is more important than quality work experience.
- High school programs must be linked to postsecondary training, training provided either by industry or by community colleges and other postsecondary institutions in *close cooperation* with industry and *in conjunction* with work experience.
- There must be a high degree of interaction and linkage between schools and industry to:
  - Establish clear paths from school to work.
  - Provide information not only to students, but also to teachers and school administrators about the requirements of the workplace, career advancement and specific occupations.
- Increase the involvement of industry in the development and/or operation and evaluation of occupationally oriented training programs.

CASE IN POINT: Working Together on Work Force Development

Concerned about the region's loss of quality workers and the need to prepare a work force responsive to the region's labor market changes, the Louisville Area Chamber of Commerce leadership took action. It brought together over 200 businesses with school, college and university leaders to begin a process for identifying and accessing training and job opportunities for new and existing workers. The result was the establishment of the Kentuckiana Workforce Institute in 1990. As the first item on its agenda, business representatives in 13 industry areas are analyzing their occupational area and skill requirements. They will then work with educators at all levels to establish a means for addressing training and skill standards for industry-specific jobs.

With notable exceptions—for example, Pittsburgh—most urban school systems have done little in recent decades to update their vocational education programs or to reorient their so-called "general track" programs in the high schools. Instead, they have directed most of their attention to the college preparatory track. As a result, they could be stuck with too many vocational programs that become "dumping grounds," designed for students who were presumed to be incapable of academic learning. In an era of abundant low-skill, routine jobs requiring little thought, little on-job learning or problem-solving, and few social or communications skills (e.g., assembly-line jobs), these assumptions may have sufficed. They are grossly inadequate today.

It was once implicitly assumed that students would gain an understanding of the workplace and job-readiness skills on their own, before or after they left school. But this also describes a vanished world. Inner cities, in particular, are full of young people with little or no direct experience of the world of work. They've not held jobs, and too often no one in their family has. Yet very few school systems have *systematically* attempted to use part-time work and other forms of experiential education to fill this serious void.

The neglect of occupational education and the poor system of school-to-work transition are compounded by the absence of a tradition of industry involvement in the issue. Most training dollars in industry are devoted to middle management and above, relying on very informal on-the-job training to develop the skills of entry-level workers. And, despite widespread complaints that the schools are not providing the kinds of new employees they need, very few companies are involved in working with the schools to address this problem. For example, a 1991 National Association of Manufacturers survey of 4,000 companies found that some 83 percent experience problems finding qualified entry-level workers and that 60 percent believe work experience is one of the best ways to develop better entry-level workers. However, only 5 percent of the companies were involved in work/learn programs with schools and, as of 1989, business contributions to public schools were estimated to be less than 10 percent of the amount given to institutions of higher education (Council for Aid to Education, 1989).

As these figures suggest, there is a void waiting to be filled, a chasm that seems especially wide in light of competitor nations' strong traditions of industry involvement in the occupational education of youth.

However, there are promising signs. Although we did not find any city where business/education linkages were as systematic or extensive as needed to fully address the education-for-employment needs of the schools, there was an encouraging degree of involvement, innovation, success and preliminary steps taken toward developing more effective work force education. Promising approaches and developments fall into several categories, which are discussed in the following sections.

Improving Coordination and Collaboration Among Systems

In cities like Portland and Louisville, the business community had become involved in taking a systematic look at occupational education and, using its convening power, has played an important role in getting schools, government and the private sector to view hitherto disparate, fragmented and uncoordinated efforts as part of one big system.

In Pittsburgh, the effort now under way is even broader; it plans to coordinate not only the programs of job training organizations, but those of human service agencies capable of providing the supportive services disadvantaged persons often need—day care, health care, varieties of personal counseling, etc. Thus far, there have been a number of successful programs and promising plans for collaborative strategies that blend the efforts of these systems.

The highly fragmented nature of the public and private job training system (or, as it can more accurately be called, "non-system") cries out for policy coordination and programming collaboration. Pieces of that system include:

- Career and vocational programs in the public schools, including those funded by the federal Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act (usually referred to as the Perkins Act), a major source of vocational education support;
- Programs at community colleges, which in many communities have become the fastest-growing and largest source of training for office and technical professions;
- Programs funded by the federal Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA), which are overseen and sometimes managed by business-led Private Industry Councils (PICs) created by that legislation;
- Proprietary and other private postsecondary training institutions, for whom federal "Pell grants" and guaranteed student loans are typically a major source of tuition payments;
- Employer-run training programs, including both informal on-the-job training and more formal programs; and
- Apprenticeship programs run by unions or unions and industry jointly, and the new youth apprenticeship programs being promoted and supported by state and federal government initiatives.

If we are right in believing that an important element of education reform is developing a larger, more sophisticated, more systematic and less haphazard system of workplace education, the desirability of harmonizing the efforts of these entities and focusing them, to the extent practicable, on priority targets is clear.

Improving Labor Market Information

In Louisville, the business community has taken the lead in developing a sophisticated capacity to gather information on changing labor market demand, through the Kentuckiana Workforce Institute. This information will be conveyed to the schools and used as the basis for joint planning of programs to address those needs.

Some question the need for such efforts, since the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics and state and local counterpart agencies already gather and disseminate extensive projections of changing occupational demand. Such information is an important resource, but it is one-dimensional. Also needed are:

- A capacity to relate broad projections to major local economic development activities; and
- A capacity for continuous interaction between schools and employers, to convey information about both the labor market in general and the needs of specific industries and employers. The required information is more nuanced, detailed and timely than econometric projections can provide.

"Guaranteed" Jobs Programs

In Boston, implementation of the initial Compact, while disappointing in terms of broader school reform, nonetheless produced substantial improvements in school-to-work transition. The combination of a very successful job pledge campaign with the positioning of job development/placement specialists in every high school (funded by the PIC) succeeded in placing thousands of Boston school graduates in jobs, many in premier firms with little or no previous record of hiring recent public school graduates. The combination of the Compact's guaranteed jobs program with a robust economy in the mid-1980s produced an unprecedented result: black youth employment rates in Boston equaled those of whites, in stark contrast to large differentials favoring whites in most cities and in the country as a whole.

Other cities have attempted to replicate the Boston Compact's jobs program, while also trying to learn from Boston's experience. A basic limitation of the initial Boston Compact was that no clear plan for overall school reform was in place at its genesis. The business community rapidly and effectively delivered on its end of the bargain, aided by strong staff support from the PIC and substantial involvement of major employers not only in hiring themselves, but in urging smaller employers to do so. However, little progress was made in improving education in the school system itself so that graduates were better prepared to become outstanding employees.

CASE IN POINT: The Compact Inside Out

In Prince George's County, Maryland, the idea of guaranteed hiring has been turned inside out. There, the school system guarantees employers that its graduates will meet their standards, or it will provide the added education and training needed for them to do so—at no cost to the employer. While relatively few employers have actually taken the school system up on the offer, it is an idea with symbolic power and local observers believe it has helped "market" school graduates to employers.

Accordingly, Cincinnati, Philadelphia and several other cities have made efforts to institute hiring programs contingent on schools improving the qualifications of graduates. In Philadelphia, for example, business and the schools jointly developed a comprehensive "Education for Employment" plan before initiating a priority hiring program. In this program, employers agree to interview up to three graduates of public schools implementing the school-improvement program. These employers then hire the students who meet their qualifications without considering any other candidates.

However, other cities have found it difficult to develop the same degree of business commitment to priority hiring of public school graduates that Boston did. In part, this may reflect a tendency to view the Compact as a failure, writing off the whole approach without careful consideration of some of its very real accomplishments. In part, it may simply be that few cities have a business community that has labored as hard and long as Boston's. And in part, it may be because the process of school reform in most cities proceeds in fits and starts, making a precisely calibrated linkage of hiring campaigns and school improvement difficult to achieve.

Despite these difficulties, the Compact strategy retains enormous conceptual appeal, in our view, as one important—and perhaps necessary—piece of a school reform strategy. At the very minimum, the lessons of the Boston Compact and such programs as Jobs for America's Graduates, the New York Working program of the New York City Partnership and Cleveland's School-to-Work program have shown two things:

- A school-based employment office, with job placement and development functions, increases opportunities and access to good jobs for disadvantaged students and offers a valuable service to employers by giving them a point of contact in the schools that is sensitive to their needs; and
- It is helpful if the job placement/development staff in these offices report not only to the principal but also to an external private employer (or their agent), to maintain accountability and to facilitate communication with the employer community.

Employer-Based Training

A growing number of economists and policy analysts have argued that in order to improve the competitiveness of its system, the United States must directly involve employers in the training of youth, roughly from ages 16 to 20, who plan to enter the labor market without first going to college. Such analysts frequently single out Germany as a model, since its highly skilled work force seems to be at least partly the product of its "dual system" of education. There, one track leads to university, while a larger track—serving about 70 percent of the population—leads to a highly developed apprenticeship system in which industries assume total responsibility for academic and vocational education.

The German model is not the only foreign approach worth considering. In Sweden, for example, vocational training remains based in the schools, but there is very extensive employer involvement in program design, training and provision of work experience. In Japan, with quite a different tradition, employers have little formal connection to schools before youth graduate, but individual high schools have strong linkages with individual firms, who hire graduates and provide training to entry-level workers.

The extent to which any of these foreign models can be lifted and replicated wholesale in this country, with its very different traditions and structures, is questionable. However, there are interesting experiments and, in one case, a widely replicated, well-evaluated and effective model, on which to develop and explore viable, cost-effective approaches. These examples include variations on the theme of cooperative education, pilot efforts to adapt the German system to U.S. industry, and the High School Academies program, which was developed more than 20 years ago in Philadelphia and has been widely replicated and evaluated in that city, in California and elsewhere.

Summarizing the Action Agenda

What a partnership's action agenda should be is one of the key strategic questions, but as is the case in other aspects of school reform, answering the question leads to other questions. While it is preferable to answer all these questions up front, the experience of the cities we have reviewed and the literature on the complex topic of school reform in general suggest that this will rarely be possible. While these questions must eventually be addressed, it is likely that most answers will develop, evolve and even change over time, as partnerships undergo the growing pains of experience.

To summarize, the key determinants of effective action plans are:

- They are integrally related to an overall strategy and vision for school reform.
- They focus the business role on areas where business has a clear comparative advantage in getting the job done, while acknowledging that most of the work will be done by the educators.
- They are based on careful analysis of the problem, supporting a strong hypothesis about what it will take to solve the problem and a careful review of alternative approaches to that solution.
- Business is clear about which of the five basic roles it will play:
  - A watchdog role;
  - A supportive role;
  - A convening role;
  - An advocacy role; or
  - An agent's role.

CASE IN POINT: New Wine in an Old Bottle

Cooperative education is an old, well-established model with a small but devoted following—devoted because co-op students, who typically work half time under careful supervision in their chosen occupation and spend half time in school, typically get jobs with their co-op employers in very high percentages, indicating that both students and employers are happy with the program. Because co-op is usually limited to top vocational students—a shrinking share of the high school population—the program has never been large, but some recent efforts suggest that variations on the theme of co-op education may offer promise as a U.S. version of the German dual system. For instance:

- As a leadership company in the Cincinnati Youth Collaborative, Procter & Gamble committed to hiring graduates of the Cincinnati Public Schools (CPS), but found many lacked the skills to succeed in the P&G workplace. Rather than abandoning the idea, however, P&G developed a co-op program for public school graduates with the local two-year technical college. P&G hires CPS graduates with the provision that they will enroll in the co-op program. They attend the technical college and work part time at P&G, with a guarantee of full-time employment on successfully completing their postsecondary education.
- As part of Philadelphia's "Education for Employment" program, United Parcel Service and the Internal Revenue Service have entered into a program with Lincoln High School in which Lincoln seniors spend a semester of their senior year at the employer's site, working for pay and participating in employer-run education and training programs.

These are recent efforts whose effectiveness remains to be seen, but they (and others like them) suggest the potential of revisiting the old idea of co-op education.

CASE IN POINT: The Rhine Meets the Charles

Beginning in September 1991, 87 students in four Boston high schools enrolled in Project Protech. Protech is one of the U.S. Department of Labor's youth apprenticeship "demonstration" projects, but it is also a logical extension of the business community's collaborative efforts with the public schools.

Project Protech's aim is to prepare students for careers in health care by blending—and over time changing the nature of—their formal schooling with relevant, hands-on experience in health care institutions themselves. With the health care field growing nationally, such jobs are plentiful in Boston, and local employers have had difficulty filling these slots in the past.

Designed as a four-year program, Project Protech initially involves six of the city's health institutions. Students in the program attend four days of classes in their schools, and the fifth day in an assigned hospital, with classes and labs there conducted by hospital personnel. (Teachers from the high schools also spend time in the hospitals, and hospital supervisors provide some classroom instruction at the schools.) Part-time jobs at the hospitals are also available for the students.

The students can train for specific occupations, which include EEG and EKG technician, medical secretary, ultrasound technician and nuclear medicine technician. In the later phases of the program, they may attend a local community college and take courses specially designed by both college staff and representatives of the health care institutions.

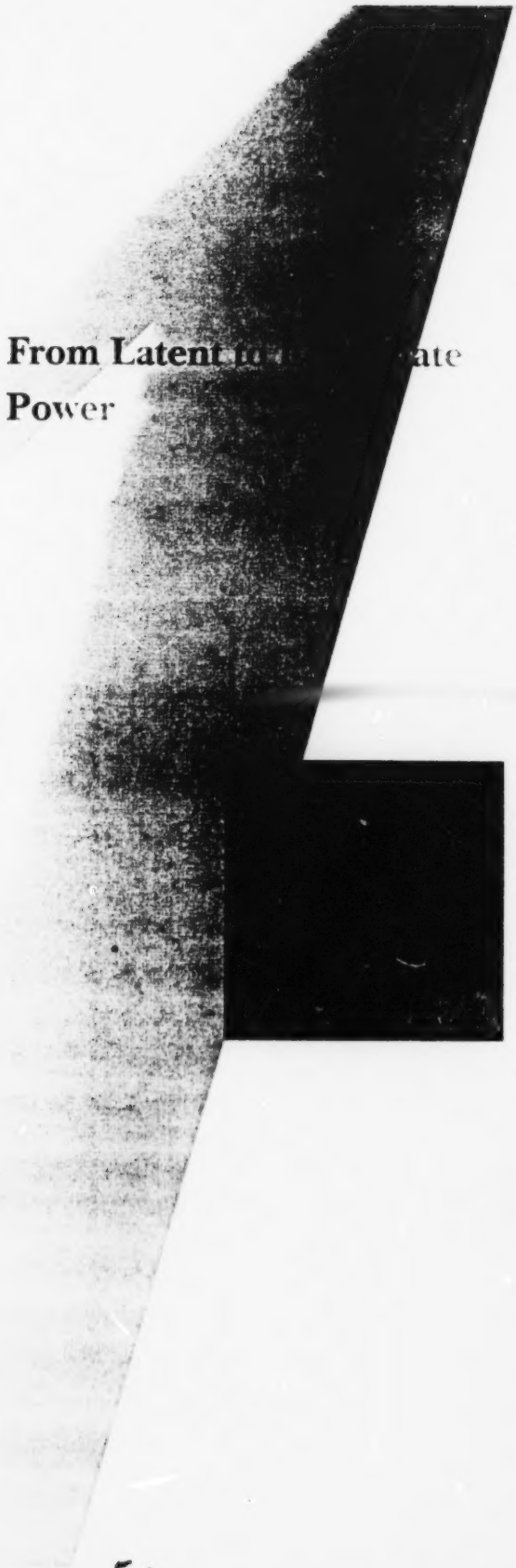
Jobs for the Future, a Massachusetts-based nonprofit extensively involved in school-based learning efforts, will provide technical assistance to the project. And as part of a national assessment funded by the Labor Department, Mathematica Policy Research will be documenting and assessing the program as it develops.

CASE IN POINT: Interest Comes First

To get into Oakland's Health and Bioscience Academy—one of the Bay Area city's eight occupationally focused "schools within schools"—students must be doing poorly in regular high school yet display an interest in health-related science. Not only do the 175 Academy students dramatically improve their performance with the health-related focus, they actually outperform the 1,650 students in the traditional high school where the Academy is housed—getting better grades, showing up and graduating at higher rates, going on to college and technical schools, doing well on the jobs pledged by local employers. The Academy, whose geneology goes back to the Philadelphia Academies, which started in 1969, and California's Peninsula Academies, which was initiated in 1981, combines small classes that emphasize a sense of community, general high school courses, a "double dose" of science, tutoring from local college students, and internships, mentors, part-time jobs and field trips sponsored by local employers. In return, employers get better entry-level workers and graduates from professional schools with a stake in the community that recognized their interest and helped them pursue it.

These roles are not mutually exclusive, though it is clearly tricky to combine the watchdog role (whose ultimate tool is public criticism) with the supportive or agent's role, in which harmony and close working relationships are needed.

It is worth stressing that school reform is a business in which it is often possible to learn from the experience of others. However, it is also rarely possible to find a template forged elsewhere that addresses exactly what a given community or school system needs. While the broad themes and principles may be similar, there are too many variables and local differences in institutions, leadership and custom to make copycat strategies viable, with occasional and partial exceptions to the rule. This truth explains in part why it is so hard to develop a strategy appropriate to a given community, but also explains why it is so important.



From Latent **ate**
Power

We now turn to the fourth strategic issue: converting the latent power of the business community into legitimate power as a major educational player.

Making change takes power. In the public sector, the effective exercise of power requires that it be, in fact and in perception, legitimate power. In a formal legalistic sense, this means power exercised in a fashion consistent with law, democracy and the duly constituted public authorities. But less formally, it also means power whose legitimacy is acknowledged by those authorities and by the public at large.

Business organizations, like any other group, can lobby for changes in the laws or policies governing education. This is certainly legitimate, and business organizations in many of the sites visited have done this as advocates of changes in laws, funding or regulations at the state level; or as advocates of particular policies, reform strategies or programs with the local school board and superintendent. In some cases, this traditional exercise of political muscle (in coalitions) has been quite effective in producing basic governance changes or funding of such services as early childhood education as a prerequisite to educational reform.

But as one moves closer to the question of influencing the day-to-day directions of a reform strategy, the choices of key personnel (such as the superintendent), and the operational decisions about resource allocation, program and curriculum, the development of legitimate power goes beyond the right to lobby.

In particular, if business expects to be a major partner in reform, it not only must honor the legally constituted process of governance, it must also establish its own informal legitimacy—that is, its credibility and credentials as a major educational player.

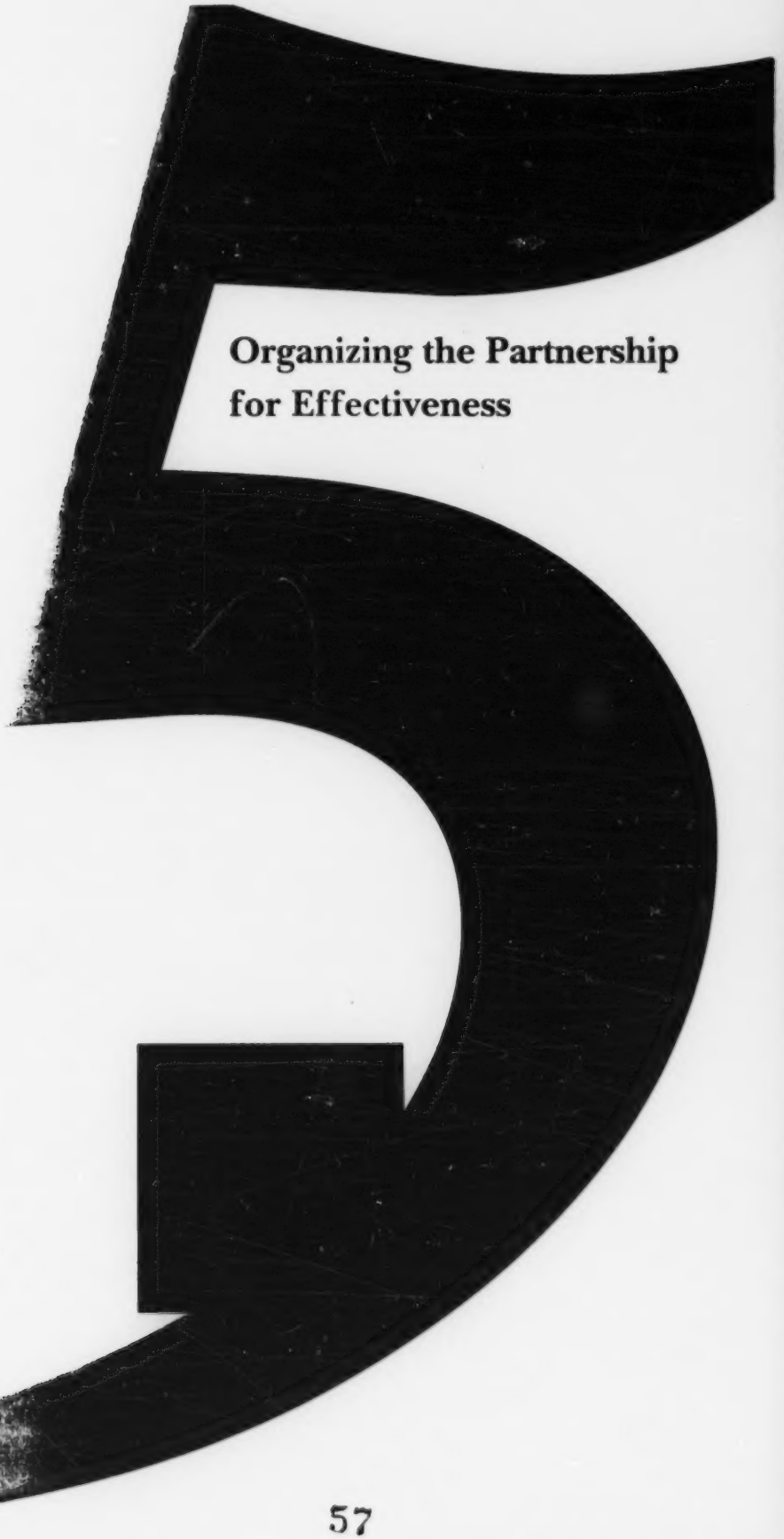
Assuming that a business community has developed the will, the commitment and the sophistication to be a major player, this need not be terribly difficult to do. As discussed earlier, the business community has considerable latent or potential power as a consumer of the education system's product, as potentially the most powerful constituent of education in many urban communities, and as inherently prestigious (though that varies substantially from place to place). Further, if the business community limits its role primarily to a supportive one, the issue of legitimacy will not arise: few will look a gift horse in the mouth, especially when the duly constituted authorities have asked for the gift.

But in a more proactive role, business is likely to encounter skepticism, even antagonism. School board members will react with suspicion or hostility if they perceive an effort to usurp their policy-making functions. Teachers' unions—whose contracts often go well beyond narrow issues of compensation and working conditions to issues that would be considered management prerogatives in the business world—may see potential undermining of collective bargaining rights. Capable and committed administrators and teachers will take umbrage at criticisms, whether well-founded or not, that they feel unjustly tar them with the same brush as less diligent colleagues. Parents and community activists, especially in minority communities, may have a jaundiced view of the business community to begin with.

The tendency to mistrust a largely white business community among the largely minority communities served by many urban school systems—communities whose members often feel they have been excluded, overlooked or actively discriminated against by business in the past—is a particularly sensitive dimension of the legitimacy question. And it has been a thorny political question in some cities where the minority community has recently gained control of the school board or superintendency, only to find a business community that was not a player when whites ran the system now supporting changes in governance.

The longer the business community has been a player, the more it has worked in alliance with other key groups and political leaders both inside and outside the school system, and the more it has been able to operate within policy frameworks and reform strategies articulated by the school board and superintendent, the fewer the questions about the legitimacy of its power. But some guidelines are emerging from experience that will be helpful in establishing that legitimacy. In addition to seeking coalitions and working with elected political leaders, these guidelines include the following:

- Become knowledgeable about the agendas and interests of other parties to the partnership—especially the school system, the teachers (and their union) and the parents—so you can select goals and develop programs in which everyone has an interest in winning—just as you would in crafting a joint venture in the business world.
- If business is the new kid on the block, deliver something before demanding something. In this respect, "helping-hand" programs, even if they do not address fundamental reform, may have strategic value in establishing business's seriousness and credentials.
- Don't promise anything that can't be delivered. The cynics have long memories, especially for failure.
- Don't start programs that are not based on careful analysis and sound planning. Not only will they fail, they will earn a reputation for amateurism, dilettantism or worse.
- Don't substitute PR for good evaluation. Some people will be fooled, but not the cynics or the solid professionals whose support is crucial.
- Stay at the table.



Organizing the Partnership for Effectiveness

For the most part, staffing and structuring partnership organizations are relatively straightforward matters familiar to all parties. There is no one best way to organize, but there are a number of preferred methods that can be employed, depending on the role the business community is playing, the nature of its activities, the scale of the city and the preexisting set of organizations.

In some cities, there is no formal citywide partnership organization at all (e.g., Louisville), though special purpose organizations have been developed for some activities (such as the JOBS program for welfare recipients). In other cities, there is an umbrella organization of leaders but no staff dedicated to it; rather, staff of existing governmental agencies provide help as necessary. In still other cities, an umbrella organization sets the priorities and broad strategy, and other organizations—the loose equivalent of subsidiaries and/or task forces—carry out the work. In still other cities, the partnership organization has several staff who do much of the planning and management of programs.

While organizational structure will vary, some considerations are particularly important to the public policy arena and apply across most sites.

The most important of these is that the staff director, if the partnership has one, be a person who can operate and communicate effectively in both the world of business and the world of schools. These worlds have very different cultures and jargons, and bridging them requires a bilingual broker.

On one hand, business leaders may be unprepared for the dynamics of public education. They will generally be accustomed to making decisions quickly, and moving promptly to implement those decisions. But in the politically dense but loosely jointed world of public education, where lines of authority are diffuse and weak, even small decisions have potentially large political consequences; thus, implementation processes are protracted. On the other hand, school people may have unrealistic expectations—either too high or too low—about what business can contribute and may not understand either the right level or the right settings for involving business. The staff of partnership programs must understand these differences and help "translate" for each of the two worlds.

Further, a partnership needs a staff director whose ego is under control and who is willing and able to give away credit to the prime partners—e.g., the superintendent and business leaders. Most cities we visited had in fact found staff—in a couple of instances from within the school system, in others from outside—who had the requisite experience and skills to operate effectively in both worlds. In a couple of cities, however, the staff directors, while highly skilled in many respects, were viewed by school leaders as using their relationship with business leaders to build their own power base, in effect acting as "shadow" superintendents. Not surprisingly, this became a source of conflict and an impediment to implementation of partnership initiatives.

In addition to the special qualifications required of a staff director, the following considerations are often important in structuring partnerships to achieve breadth, depth and continuity of effort:

Pay attention to the ecology of existing organizations.

In any major area of partnership activity, it is sensible to inventory existing efforts and the organizations conducting them, to determine the extent to which the partnership can build on what is in place. A basic question is whether to create a new organization to carry out partnership activities in this area (as was done in Cleveland and Cincinnati), or to use an existing organization as the partnership vehicle (as was done in Boston, Prince George's County and Louisville). The latter option is often preferable to starting *de novo* and proliferating organizations with similar purposes. But whatever the decision, it is important to remember that new initiatives will alter the ecology of existing ones; careful planning can prevent this from causing conflict or confusion.

Make sure resources are adequate to the job.

The educational landscape in most cities is littered with promising programs that never achieved their potential because they were not adequately funded, staffed or otherwise supported. There is no reason for partnerships to add to this list.

Consider using or creating intermediary organizations when ongoing efforts to stimulate collaboration and joint programming are involved.

When the business community plays an agent's role, it usually does so in cooperation with the schools, or colleges, or some other public entity. When programs involve disparate actors from different worlds, it is often desirable to place responsibilities for planning and implementing the effort in an intermediary organization, whether new or existing (e.g., the Private Industry Council's role in implementing Boston's jobs program and the youth apprenticeship program).

Like developers in the construction business or fiscal intermediaries who put together complex financial packages, intermediaries in the public policy world are organizations whose mission is to harmonize the interests and procedures of differing institutions toward common ends. The intermediary is like the honest broker, in that its success is contingent on the success of other entities. Hence, it has unique incentives to pay attention to very basic questions about what is needed to sustain collaboration. Further, in school/business partnerships, where the major partners have many other demands on their attention, the intermediary is the one entity whose primary mission is to keep its eye on the ball the partnership has put in play. It is best able to perform this role if it is either a) a neutral organization trusted and respected by all parties, or b) an organization constructed for this purpose that is "owned" in common—e.g., with board members from both the school system and business community.

CASE IN POINT: A New Umbrella

In the late 1980s, Cleveland business and philanthropic leaders invested in several new initiatives aimed at improving student performance, and significantly increased the number of corporations paired with individual schools.

The major corporate investors believed that their efforts would be accompanied by significant reform in educational practice, though what these reforms would be was not spelled out. Several years later, it seemed clear that significant school reform was not occurring. Corporate and philanthropic leaders called in an outside organization to look at the situation; its major recommendation was to establish an umbrella organization for the various corporate initiatives to work for school reform, using as leverage the total investments these initiatives represented.

A new organization was formed, the Cleveland Initiative for Education (CIE), because the corporate sponsors of the only existing organization that seemed suitable or capable enough had previously decided not to enter the education arena. The CIE has had to face the challenge of establishing itself both among Cleveland's educational players, and among the preexisting business and philanthropic education initiatives. The results are not yet in.

In addition to these structural properties, nonprofit intermediary organizations often have a comparative advantage in attracting grants from private foundations and competitive governmental sources, and a flexibility in action that public and corporate bureaucracies lack.

Work to achieve breadth, depth and continuity of business community involvement.

If we are right that business community involvement in school reform not only has great potential, but is also an imperative for civic, social, educational and economic reasons, it follows that breadth, depth and continuity of effort are needed.

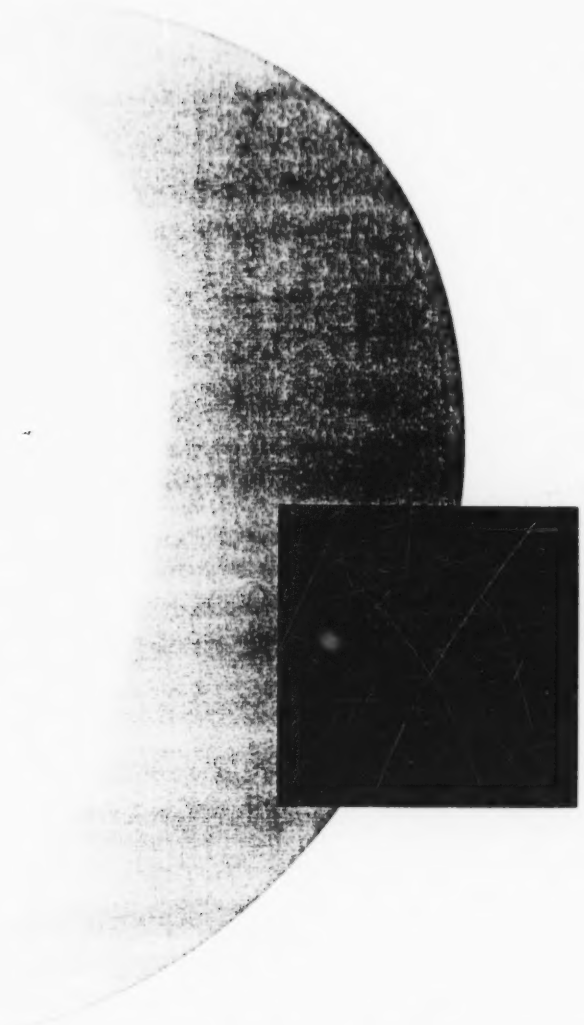
Certainly, the staying power of the business community in cities like Boston, Portland, Pittsburgh and Louisville, where business has had significant involvement in issues related to school reform for over a decade, indicates considerable breadth and continuity of effort.

There are other cities, however, where business involvement has been fragmented, and only a handful of people and companies have shown much depth of concern. In one city we reviewed, there was concern that if one leader disappeared, the entire effort would sink; in two other cities, concern was expressed by several observers that the success of the effort was too heavily dependent on staff leadership, with little breadth or depth of understanding—or commitment—on the part of the business executives whose names adorned the letterheads of partnership organizations.

How breadth, depth and continuity of effort can be achieved will vary from place to place; it will likely be impossible in communities where business leaders are skeptical about the feasibility of school reform, or are unconvinced of its importance. But it seems more likely to occur when:

- Leadership does not become too closely identified with one individual, but instead rests with an organization or group within which leadership can be passed on;
- There is a sustained effort to make sure a cadre of CEOs are engaged and are knowledgeable;
- There is a structure of involvement that reaches into companies to engage other executives, line managers, human resource personnel and corporate affairs departments; and
- There is a strong communications campaign designed to spread throughout the business community a message about the importance of involvement, the opportunities for involvement, and the substance of involvement.

Absent Without Leave: Evaluating Results



When asked about evaluation, a businessman in one city said, "We don't bother much with that. If it feels right, we figure it's working." A more common response was along the lines of "We know evaluation is important, but we have not done much because . . ."

Whatever the reasons, the strongest generalization we can make about the shortcomings of school/business partnerships, based on the sites we are familiar with and our reading of the literature, is that for all their talk about being "results-oriented," business leaders have paid far too little attention to evaluation. And with occasional notable exceptions, the evaluations that have been conducted have lacked rigor.

This is puzzling, given the "bottom-line" orientation of most business leaders and the fact that, absent signs of results, they are apt to lose interest. We suspect there are several underlying reasons for businesses' failure to insist on evaluating programs in which they are involved.

Only one of these reasons is partly valid. It is that premature evaluation—done before trust has developed and before programmatic initiatives have been implemented long enough to get the bugs out—can blow the game. This does not mean, however, that the apparatus for evaluation and a method for systematic feedback on how implementation is going should not be put in place from day one.

The invalid reasons are that:

- The school system's leadership is more interested in good press than evaluation, and fears the latter may hurt the former.
- Business leaders see their involvement as just another form of philanthropy and are more interested in generating goodwill—and feeling good—than they are in rigorous evaluation.
- Business leaders count on the schools to produce evaluative data without realizing the severe limitations of the data systems in many school systems, or the inappropriateness of the data most often collected for evaluative purposes—i.e., standardized test scores, data used for financial reporting purposes and information required to demonstrate compliance with state or federal regulations.
- Business leaders (and some educational leaders) confuse indicators of improvement with measures of effectiveness or impact.

To clarify, the last point refers to the difference between, for example, improved test scores or decreased dropout rates and evidence that a particular strategy or program has "added value." Test scores, for example, can increase (or decline) for all sorts of reasons that have nothing to do with school effectiveness. These include changes in the demographic characteristics of students taking the tests, changes in the method of test administration, increased student familiarity with a particular form of test, and other reasons unrelated to educational improvement.

Dropout rates can increase or decline for exogenous reasons, too. For instance, it is often true that when labor market demand is high, dropout rates increase as students leave school to capitalize on short-term economic oppor-

tunities, and vice versa. We heard business leaders question the value of the Boston Compact because dropout rates went up. But was the Compact's dropout goal not met because of a super-hot labor market or because there is more to student retention than the promise of a job? No one really knows.

Making matters more difficult, there can be complex and seemingly perverse interactions between results. For instance, a reduced dropout rate can have a negative effect on attendance rates or test scores if more students with a marginal attachment to school and poor academic skills stay in school and thus constitute a higher percentage of the student body, or if students not previously judged to be college-bound take SAT tests.

The basic point is that educational evaluation is very complex, much more complex than keeping score by watching the bottom line of corporate profits. Indeed, it is far too complex for more than a cursory treatment in this guide. But it is hard to believe that the serious, long-term business of school reform can succeed without adequate measures of success.

Accordingly, we will simply suggest a few rules we believe school/business partnerships should follow if they are to take evaluation seriously:

- **Develop an evaluation program at three levels:**
  - Evaluate the overall progress of the school system toward key reform goals;
  - Evaluate the overall effectiveness (and implementation) of the partnership and its strategy; and
  - Evaluate any specific programs operated by the partnership that aim to improve some aspect of student or school system performance.
- **Use a multidimensional approach to evaluation:**
  - Specify implementation objectives and performance indicators that school staff, program staff or business task forces themselves can collect and assess in relatively simple fashion to guide the management of reform initiatives; and
  - Engage qualified third-party professional evaluators to provide methodologically sophisticated measures of impact or effectiveness.
- **Give priority attention, where needed, to developing the information systems capacity of the school system** so that the data generated help answer the evaluative questions being asked (an area where loaned business expertise can help).
- **Support efforts to develop better measures of outcome,** especially means of measuring student performance, which—unlike the multiple-choice standardized tests prevalent in most systems—measure students' ability to think, solve problems, work in teams, and otherwise perform the tasks required in the real world for which their education is, one hopes, preparing them.

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Appendix A: Organizations Representing Initiatives Cited in the Report

The Allegheny Policy Council for Youth and Workforce Development
c/o Allegheny Conference on Community Development
U.S. Steel Building
600 Grant Street, #4444
Pittsburgh, PA 15219
(412) 281-1890

Boston Compact
c/o Boston Public Schools
26 Court Street, 5th Floor
Boston, MA 02108
(617) 635-9060

Business and Community Outreach
Prince George's County Public Schools
14201 School Lane
Upper Marlboro, MD 20772
(301) 952-6016

Cincinnati Youth Collaborative
524 Walnut Street, Suite 808
Cincinnati, OH 45202
(513) 621-0033

Cleveland Initiative for Education
TransOhio Building
2000 East 9th Street, Suite 825
Cleveland, OH 44115
(216) 566-5988

Committee to Support the Philadelphia Public Schools
c/o Greater Philadelphia First
1818 Market Street, Suite 3510
Philadelphia, PA 19103
(215) 515-2200

Community Leaders Allied for Superior Schools (CLASS)
201 North Illinois Street, Suite 2070
Indianapolis, IN 46204
(317) 237-3345

Greater Milwaukee Education Trust
756 North Milwaukee Street
Milwaukee, WI 53202
(414) 287-4145

Leaders Roundtable
1704 N.E. 26th Avenue
Portland, OR 97212
(503) 280-1058 ext. 346

The Louisville Education and Employment Partnership
305 West Broadway, Suite 506
Louisville, KY 40202
(502) 581-9155

Minneapolis Youth Trust
81 South 9th Street, Suite 200
Minneapolis, MN 55402
(612) 370-9185

New York City Partnership
1 Battery Park Plaza
New York, NY 10004-1479
(212) 493-7400

Seattle Alliance for Education
1326 Fifth Avenue, Suite 827
Seattle, WA 98101
(206) 343-0449

Appendix B: Information Resources for School/ Business Partnerships and/or Education Reform

Accelerated Schools Project
Center for Educational Research (CERAS)
CERAS Bldg., Room 109
Stanford University
Stanford, CA 94305-3084
(415) 725-3095

The Center for Collaborative Education
1573 Madison Ave., Room 201
New York, NY 10029
(212) 348-7821

Center for Policy Research in Education
Eagleton Institute of Politics
Rutgers University
Woodlawn Bldg., Neilson Campus
New Brunswick, NJ 08901
(908) 932-9384

Coalition of Essential Schools
Box 1969
Brown University
Providence, RI 02912
(401) 863-3384

Committee for Economic Development
477 Madison Avenue, 6th Floor
New York, NY 10022
(212) 688-2063

Conference Board
845 Third Ave.
New York, NY 10022
(212) 759-0900

Council of Chief State School Officers
1 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Suite 700
Washington, DC 20001-1431
(202) 408-5505

Department of Labor Office of Work-Based Learning
200 Constitution Ave., NW, Suite N4649
Washington, DC 20210
(202) 219-6540

Education Commission of the States
707 17th Street, Suite 2700
Denver, CO 80202
(303) 299-3600

The Institute for Educational Leadership Inc.
1001 Connecticut Ave., NW, Suite 310
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 822-8405

Institute for Research and Reform in Education
250 Mill Street
Rochester, NY 14614
(716) 777-4005

Jobs for the Future
1815 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02140
(617) 661-3411

Johns Hopkins Team Learning Project
Center for Social Organization of Schools (CSOS)
3505 North Charles St.
Baltimore, MD 21218
(410) 516-0370

National Alliance of Business
1201 New York Ave., NW, Suite 700
Washington, DC 20005
(202) 289-2888

National Association of Partners in Education
209 Madison Street, Suite 401
Alexandria, VA 22314
(703) 836-4880

National Center on Education and the Economy
39 State St., Suite 500
Rochester, NY 14614
(716) 546-7620

National Institute for Work and Learning
1255 23rd Street, NW, Suite 400
Washington, DC 20037
(202) 862-8845

New Futures Initiative
c/o The Annie E. Casey Foundation
1 Lafayette Place
Greenwich, CT 06830
(203) 661-2773

Public Education Fund Network
601 13th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20005
(202) 628-7460

Yale Child Study Center
P.O. Box 3333
230 South Frontage Road
New Haven, CT 06510
(203) 785-2513

Public/Private Ventures
399 Market Street
Philadelphia, PA 19106
215/592-9099

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